

January 2005



MONTANA GEAR UP

GAINING EARLY AWARENESS & READINESS FOR
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education / Montana University System



Director's Message: by Sandy Merdinger

As we enter a new year, the GEAR UP staff is prepared to hit the ground running with a heavy agenda ahead of us. Much of our focus is on planning professional development for the remainder of the year and writing for a new grant. On the professional development front, we plan to provide last semester helps for your GEAR UP seniors, get more out to you on college visits and more. In writing the new grant, we are still in the preparation phase while we await the release of the GEAR UP grant application from the U.S. Department of Education. We are in the midst of a series of planned meetings to solicit input from a variety of parties.

During December, the GEAR UP Advisory Committee met to provide insights and suggestions for the upcoming grant. We also surveyed the Montana Advisory Council on Indian Education (MACIE) membership as a follow-up to a presentation to the group in November. Then shortly before Christmas we met with Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program (MGSLP) and Student Assistance Foundation (SAF) staff for input on our new grant. This month we have already scheduled meetings with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) staff as well as postsecondary student affairs and colleges of education personnel and a work session is also on the agenda for the GEAR UP liaisons meeting. Presentations and requests for input are also scheduled at the Board of Public Education and Presidents Council upcoming meetings. Yet to be scheduled are meetings with K-12 personnel at the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) and others working with K-12 education. We will also be attending training for writing the new grant in early February assuming that the GEAR UP application is through clearance with the Office of Management and Budget by that time. Once it is released there is a 60-day turnaround time so it is important that planning meetings begin prior to its release.

Most recently, we've been especially busy moving into our new office space. Although we really enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of MGSLP during the last four months, we are excited to be in our own space again. For any of you visiting Helena, feel free to stop in and see us. Our new space is located at the foot of the stairs coming from the first floor lobby. For those of you who don't make it to Helena, we hope to come see you in the coming months!

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Cyrus Malkin joined the state GEAR UP office on December 13, 2004 as the new Administrative Associate, and has already shown to be a great addition to our staff. Cyrus wasted no time in going to work on a new layout for the GEAR UP website which will be unveiled soon.

Welcome Cyrus!:



Cyrus flanked by our other most recent additions, Annette Walstad and Andrea Rankin.

Cyrus was born in British Columbia, Canada and grew up under the "Midnight Sun" and Northern Lights of the Yukon Territory in northern Canada. He received an Associate of Arts degree at a small Bible college in Florida, majoring in music and New Testament Greek. He has more than 6 years experience in book-keeping, accounting, and web design, coming to GEAR UP from Mountain West Bank. Cyrus and his wife, who was born and raised in Helena, moved here in 2002 and have a 1-year old daughter.

The GEAR UP Spotlight: Winnett

Shy Iverson from the Winnett Schools in Winnett Montana has been named the grand-prize winner in Scholastic's MATH Magazine "Create a Comix Villian" contest. The contest appeared in the September 20 issue of MATH Magazine, and drew nearly 500 entrants from across the country. MATH Magazine, produced in New York City, is used in middle-school classrooms nationwide. Students were asked to create and draw a mathematical foe for the magazine's popular Math Mystery comix series. Shy, an 8th grader in Mr. Norman Ostby's class, came up with the winning entry: 79-year-old Pat Turner, the evil grandmother of the strip's superhero, Zero Clue. "We received many great entries, from an artistic, creative, and mathematical viewpoint," said Jack Silbert, editor of MATH Magazine, "but Shy's entry really stood out for its great humor. And he picked a strong math topic, too: number patterns." For the grand prize, Shy's villain—and Shy himself!—will be drawn into the February 28 edition of Math Mystery Comix, by the professional artists at Miracle Studios in Oklahoma. Congratulations Shy!



Upcoming Opportunities for Professional Development:

Big Sky STARS: Student & Teacher Assessment Resources

Improve classroom instruction, raise assessment results. This special workshop will use assessment materials that are aligned to the Montana Mathematics Standards, developed by Montana teachers and piloted with Montana students. Participants will engage in activities to become assessment literate and learn to incorporate performance-based assessment tasks in their classroom. This workshop will be held February 11-12, 2005 at the Montana Learning Center at Canyon Ferry Lake, outside Helena. For registration information contact Jean Howard by email at jkhoward@MontanaLearning.org by January 15, 2005.

Montana University System Writing Assessment Regional Scoring Sessions

Training and scoring for the Montana Writing Assessment is always a worthwhile professional development opportunity for the writing teachers of Montana, K-12 through college. The sites hosting these events and corresponding dates are as follows:

March 29-30	Miles City (Miles Community College)
March 31-April 1	Billings (MSU-Billings)
April 4-5	Helena (Montana Higher Education Complex)
April 11-12	Bozeman (Holiday Inn)
April 18-19	Kalispell (FVCC)
April 19-20	Missoula (Grant Creek Inn)
April 21-22	Great Falls (MSUGF Heritage Hall)

Onsite check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. at each site. Beginning at 9:15 on the first day, participants will learn to use the rubric by scoring several sets of essays. After a short review on day two, each participant will score about 60 essays, beginning at 8:30 a.m. and ending by 4:00 p.m., depending on the pace of scoring. Lunch and light breakfasts will be provided on both days. Additional details will be sent to registrants via email. There is no registration fee for the training. For more information contact Jan Clinard at 444-0652 or e-mail jclinard@oche.montana.edu by March 15, 2005.

Title I Annual Statewide Conference

The annual Title I conference is being held February 22-24 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Registration information is available online at <http://btc.montana.edu/conf/titleone/register> and must be completed by February 15, 2005. For program information contact Gwen Smith at (406) 444-5660 or gsmith@state.mt.us.

College Goal Sunday: 5 Fast Facts and One Good Question:

College Goal Sunday, a program to help low-income and/or first generation prospective college students successfully complete the FAFSA, is coming to Montana on Sunday, February 13, 2005. Financial aid officers and other qualified professionals will be on hand at each site (13 locations in all) to ensure students receive any necessary assistance in understanding and completing the paperwork required to receive financial aid.

Fact #1: Radio ads promoting College Goal Sunday are currently airing in the Missoula market, compliments of KMSO Radio. Thanks to KMSO for their generous support! Additional radio spots will air statewide beginning in mid-January.

Fact #2: The College Goal Sunday website is now available at www.collegegoalmt.org. Some areas of the site are still under construction. General event information is currently available, and is being updated frequently.

Fact #3: Students who pre-register for College Goal Sunday by February 1 will receive a free gift. Go to the College Goal Sunday website for more information.

Fact #4: Training for College Goal Sunday site coordinators was held in Great Falls on December 16. Nearly 40 participants attended, and more volunteers are needed. Interested volunteers can locate a College Goal Sunday event through the website, and find out how to sign up as a volunteer.

Fact #5: Beginning January 1, 2005, new Department of Education PIN applicants will be asked to register a challenge question for authentication purposes. Students and parents who already have a PIN will need to update their account to add the challenge question.

And one good question...

Q. Will I be turned away at College Goal Sunday if my family is not low-income, or if I am not a first-generation college student?

A. No. College Goal Sunday is open to everyone, including students from all income levels and college-going traditions, and traditional and nontraditional students. The program has been specifically marketed to attract first generation and low-income students, but is open to everyone who needs assistance with the FAFSA.

January Reminders:

- The next Liaison meeting is scheduled for January 31-February 1, 2005 at Chico Hot Springs. Call 1-800-HOT-WADA to make your reservations and ask for the GEAR UP rate. Their website, <http://www.chicohotsprings.com> has information and driving directions.
- College Goal Sunday is Sunday, February 13, 2005. Make arrangements now to get students to one of the 13 different locations. For more information contact Libby Siebens at 406-495-7800.
- Mid-term Progress Reports are due January 31, 2005. Mid-term Fiscal Reports are due February 28, 2005.
- This year's Title I conference is being held February 22-24 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Registration information is available online at <http://btc.montana.edu/conf/titleone/register>.
- Please submit your GEAR UP Spotlight articles by the 20th of the month to be included in following newsletter to Peter Butler at pbutler@oche.montana.edu.
- This newsletter is also available online by visiting <http://gearup.montana.edu>.
- Please let us know if someone would like to be added to the newsletter distribution list.
- Happy New Year!

College Board's College Awareness Program "CollegeEd™"

The College Board and the Office of Public Instruction of Montana would like to introduce your school to the third edition of their middle school college awareness program, CollegeEd™.

CollegeEd™ was developed to inspire all students to attend and succeed in college. Students learn that they hold the key to their success by getting involved in the academic process in middle and high school.

CollegeEd™ consists of lesson plans that encourage students, especially underrepresented students, to prepare and plan for college. It helps students to discover their personal learning styles, learn time management techniques, improve note taking and individualized study skills, and manage math anxiety. It also shows students how to choose, apply, and pay for college. The self-directed Teachers Guide assists the teacher by providing lesson goals, standards correlation, assessment rubrics, and strategies to create a CollegeEd team that involves parents, teachers, staff, and the broader community. In addition to a Student Workbook and Teachers Guide, the new edition now includes a Family Handbook. It is also aligned to the U.S. Department of Education's 2002-2007 Strategic Plan, No Child Left Behind mandate, and ASCA standards.

All GEAR UP middle schools are eligible to receive CollegeEd™ for all 7th graders **free of charge!** All costs associated with this program will be paid by the Office of Public Instruction through a partnership with the College Board. For any questions or comments about this opportunity or for ordering information, please contact Kathy Mollohan at (406) 444-4317 or email at kathym@state.mt.us.

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Montana GEAR UP website:
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National GEAR UP website:
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/gearup/index.html>